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15 September 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with John Lehman, of the White House Staff, Re Senator Stennis' Letter to the President

Today I talked to John Lehman, of the White House staff, who explained that while they had originally intended to have a LIG meeting today to discuss problems created by Senator Stennis' letter to the President calling for an end to Agency funding of operations in Laos, he said the White House was completely preoccupied with the draft bill problem. Lehman said he still hoped for a LIG meeting regarding the Stennis letter at the end of this week or the beginning of next. He added that at that time he hoped for suggestions from the Agency as to the various options open to us for continuing in Laos in the face of Stennis' objections to the present arrangements. I told Lehman that we would do what we could to come up with some recommendations, but it was my impression that Stennis not only was adamant regarding Agency funding, but felt strongly that we should get entirely out of the operation. Lehman said Ken Belieu, of the White House staff, had discussed the matter with Stennis recently and felt that Stennis' position was more flexible than I had indicated. I said I certainly hoped this was true, but my recent conversations with Stennis had lead me to believe he felt the Agency should get out of Laos-type operations as soon as feasible and indeed in his letter to the President Stennis expressed the view that such operations jeopardized the Agency's primary mission of intelligence collection and analyses. I therefore felt we couldn't afford to be optimistic on how much give there was in the position of Stennis, and indeed that of other influential members of Armed Services, Appropriations, and Foreign Relations Committees who were concerned with the problem. In any event, I said we'd certainly do our best to contribute to a solution in accordance with the Administration's wishes and acceptable to the Congress and we're already putting our heads together to see if we can come up with some suggested options in response to the White House request.

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[redacted]

JOHN M. MAURY
Legislative Counsel

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